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ABSTRACT

This information sheet discusses the eligibility of students with both auditory and visual impairments for special education services, and the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). It describes the preparation necessary before the IEP team meeting and parent participation during the meeting. The process of developing an IEP is explained, including the drafting of both annual goals and short-term learning objectives. The joint effort between educators and parents in the development of an IEP is emphasized. For children who are deaf-blind, the focus of the IEP is described as exploring and trying different communication options and establishing the foundations of a communication system. In later years, it is recommended that the focus be on the expansion of the communication system and on increased interaction with friends and classmates. Parents are urged to question staff about the teaching methods that work best for their child. It is recommended that skills targeted in the IEP are directly observable and measurable, with specific criteria for success listed. Supports that educators and parents might want to consider to enable student participation are listed and include supports relating to personal needs, physical needs, sensory needs, staff and peer education, and provision of access and opportunities. Appended is a brief description of the Pennsylvania Deafblind Project. (CR)

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ED 419 366

Considerations in IEP Development for Children Who Are Deafblind

by Mary R Frey, M Ed., Education Consultant, Pennsylvania Deafblind Project

Deafblind Project

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The IEP (Individualized Education Plan) is a written plan that tells what special education program and services the child will receive.The IEP is written at a conference by a team which includes the child's parents. ...An IEP must include all the programs and services necessary to meet the child's individual needs as identified during the evaluation or re-evaluation process. (Mancuso, et. al., 1991, p.13.)

Before the IEP meeting

Assessment is an on-going process of information gathering. When formal and informal evaluation results are reviewed, they identify the child's needs and strengths. The information is the base for future directions of the IEP goals and objectives.

With a younger child, the INSITE checklist or Callier-Azuza is helpful. A number of personal futures planning tools, such as the MAPS or PATH processes can also be used to gather information - history, likes/dislikes, skills/needs, etc. - about the child who is deafblind. Identification of how the child receives information, preferred learning style, and modes of communication are considered.

Parents need access to therapy reports and other evaluative information before the IEP meeting is held so they have time to read, absorb, and question. Holding a preplanning meeting or phone calls with the rest of the IEP team members may be ways for all to share equally in voicing their concerns about the child and answering questions about the child's current status. Parents need to consider what the priorities for learning are for the child. Make note of the areas that evaluators found difficult for the child.

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During the meeting

Family participation is integral to the IEP process and parents are to be active members of the team. Family members are the child's primary teachers. The child should participate in the actual conference to

the best of his/her abilities. When it is not feasible for the child to be present, having a photograph on the table can remind the team to stay child-centered during the planning process.

When the team meets to discuss and write an IEP for a child who is deafblind, the impact of the dual sensory impairments upon the child and upon the methods of communication and instruction must be recognized. Efforts to promote the use of existing hearing and vision while providing appropriate accommodations throughout the plan are important. The IEP is to be functional, relevant, and age appropriate to the child.

Based on the child's needs while building upon the child's strengths, the team drafts both annual goals and short term learning outcomes. While the educational team members may have brought along written goals and objectives that they would like to be included, these are just suggestions. Rather than asking parents if they agree or disagree with pre-written objectives, meaningful and appropriate outcomes are to be discussed while considering family concerns and priorities. The IEP process is to be a joint effort.

IEP objectives do not forget isolated skills written by individual specialists on the team (e.g., vision specialist, hearing specialists, occupational therapists). Instead, these team members, along with family members, pool their expertise to create one IEP that includes objectives that are activity-based and reflect the numerous skills required by the activity. The team needs to identify the various opportunities to practice targeted IEP skills across different functional activities. (Downing, 1996, p. 39, 41)

Developing language and communication skills is the overall theme, in many cases, in developing an IEP for a child who is deafblind. In the earlier years of a child's program, time spent exploring and trying a number of communication options and establishing the foundation of a communication system is prevalent. In later years, the focus tends to be on expansion of the communication system and increasing interaction with friends and classmates. Environmental cues enhance the child's full understanding of various situations, whatever the child's preferred method of communication.

Parents can question staff about the teaching methods that work best for their child. The IEP addresses skills that promote both independence and interdependence. A multi-sensory approach in natural settings and environments is essential for successful achievement of integrated goals and objectives. Experiential learning strategies are employed since many incidental learning experiences are missed by the child who has dual sensory impairments. Opportunities for repetition and practice of skills across a number of daily activities is very important.

Skills targeted in the IEP should be directly observable and measurable with specific criteria for success listed. Adaptations and accommodations are dictated by what the child needs to support participation in his/her program.

> *Supports (examples) to consider:*
> *- personal needs (feeding, medical, personal hygiene, dressing)*
> *- physical needs (special equipment, environmental modifications)*
> *- sensory needs (accommodations for vision and hearing needs)*
> *- staff and peer education (how to communicate, what behaviors mean)*
> *- provision of access and opportunities (extracurricular activities)*
> *(Huebner, et. al, 1995, p.117)*

Once all the team members present at the meeting have shared information about the current functioning and skills of the child, drafted goals and learning outcomes, agreed upon related services and accommodations to support the child in his/her IEP program, they sign the IEP form indicating their participation in the development process. *(See Mancuso for further details.)*

After the meeting

The IEP is considered a working document. It is to be reviewed annually by the IEP team and changed when needed. Ongoing communication between families and school staff about what and how the child is learning is important.

. This information sheet briefly discusses considerations for IEP development for a child who is deafblind. If you would like more information, you may contact the Pennsylvania Deafblind Project.

References

Downing, June E., Ph. D. (1996). Including students with severe and multiple disabilities in typical classrooms. Practical strategies for teachers. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks Publishing Company.

Huebner, K., Prickett, J.G., & Welch, T.R., Joffee, E. (eds.). (1995) Hand in hand: Essentials of communication and orientation and mobility for your students who are deaf-blind. New York, NY: AFB Press.

Mancuso, E., Rieser, L., & Stotland, J.F. (1991). The right to special education in Pennsylvania: A guide for parents. Philadelphia, PA: The Education Law Center.

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717-541-4960 or toll free in Pa only 800-360-7282

Instructional Support System of Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Department of Education

Pennsylvania Deafblind Project

Web Links

Overview:

The Pennsylvania Deafblind Project is a federal grant in collaboration with the Instructional Support System of Pennsylvania, Bureau of Special Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education. Technical assistance, training and consultation services are available to families, educational personnel and other service providers of children and youth who are deafblind from birth to 21 years.

Eligibility:

The presence of both auditory and visual impairments can occur in a range of degrees, from individuals who are both totally deaf and totally blind to those who have combined milder forms of vision and hearing impairments that impact learning.

Individuals with dual-sensory impairments may include those:

- who have been diagnosed as both deaf and blind by accurate vision and hearing tests.
- who have combined hearing and visual impairments either of which may be mild to severe in degree with additional learning and/or language disabilities.
- who have progressive or degenerative disorders which affect visual and auditory systems, or
- who have functional dual-sensory impairments. These individuals, due to central nervous system dysfunction, may show inconclusive auditory and visual responses during evaluations or in the natural environment.

Also included are infants and toddlers who:

- have a diagnosed condition that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delays in vision and hearing, or are at risk of having substantial delays in hearing and vision if early intervention services are not provided.

Identification:

The Pennsylvania Deafblind Project conducts a yearly census to identify infants, toddlers, children and youth with dual sensory impairments. This federally-required process helps in the development and implementation of technical assistance to families, educational personnel and other service providers of children and youth who are deafblind.

Training and Services:

A variety of training and consultative services are available. Services include:

- on-site program consultation
- state-wide and regional workshops
- trainings for families
- family to family support
- information on most effective educational practices
- family learning retreats
- person-centered planning
- INSITE model early intervention training
- *Hand In Hand* curriculum study groups
- Quarterly Information Update

Workshops:

Upcoming Events for the PA Deafblind Project

FAMILY ACTIVITIES:

Two regional Family Learning Retreats are planned for Saturday, January 16, 1999. Information will be going out to families in the near future.	**January 16, 1999**
Statewide Retreat for Families: The theme will be "**Together We're Better: Learning Through Play and Humor**." Sessions are being planned for Friday, June 25, for educators, consultants, paraprofessionals, and early interventionists who work with children who are deafblind.	**June 25, 26, 27, 1999 in Grantville**

CONFERENCES

Spring Vision Conference: This is a joint planning/collaboration with educators of students with visual impairments (PCEVI), Pennsylvania Associations for the Blind (PAB) and Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of Blind and Visually Impaired (AER). The conference theme is "**Collaboration: A Vision for the Future**."	**April 28, 29 & 30, 1999**

Satellite Training

California Deaf-Blind Services Presents ... An Interactive Satellite Training	**October 29, 1998**

Contacts:

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Call CISC at 800-360-7282 (PA only) or 717-541-4960, ext. 3331 for large print and brailled materials, and support for the effective use of assistive technology.

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